Lane Says Garry Knew of Suicide Plan

By United Press International

Charles Garry knew about a mass suicide plan at the People's Temple in Guyana more than a year before last week's ghastly death scene at the South American commune, fellow lawyer Mark Lane said in Memphis.

"At the age of 70, Charles is too old to act like a virgin," said Lane, an attorney recently retained by the People's Temple, in response to comments made by Garry yesterday in San Francisco.

Garry, a People's Temple attorney since June 1977, said that he first learned of the possible mass suicide plans at the South American commune from Lane during their escape from the jungle and could have prevented the tragedy if Lane had shared vital information with him.

"Mr. Lane knew (about the plans of People's Temple leader Rev. Jim Jones), and he did not tell me until we were in the jungle lying on the ground for 14 hours," Garry said.

Lane, who recently moved to Memphis, said in response that he and Garry "still are on speaking terms, but if he speaks out wrongly, I'll correct him."

Lane — who is also attorney for James Earl Ray, confessed slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. — said that on Oct. 7, 1977, Jones announced in an international radio communication he had made a decision to kill everyone at his Jonestown religious commune, including 500 Americans living there.

Jones communicated that information by radio to Garry, Lane said. He said that Garry spoke three times with Jones by radio after receiving the message and pleaded with him not to kill himself and his followers.

"And he (Garry) has the gall to say he never knew of the plan until I told him about it Saturday," Lane said.

Garry said Lane got his information about the mass suicide plan from "one person who left the organization 10 days before this happened."

Lane and Garry escaped from the jungle outpost one week ago only minutes before hundreds of the cultists participated in a poisonous "last communion" following the shooting deaths of California Congressman Leo Ryan and four others. Ryan and a team of newsmen had gone to the camp to investigate reports of mistreatment of Americans. They were slain when they tried to leave last weekend.

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More than 775 bodies have been found at the commune, and officials said the death count could be as high as 800 before an investigation is completed. U.S. officials in Guyana said they tentatively have identified 174 of the cult members, but only the body of Jones has been positively identified at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, where 421 bodies so far have been flown from South America on Air Force C-141 cargo planes.

Lane said that as an attorney for the religious group, Garry would have had to answer a complaint filed in Superior Court against the People's Temple in San Francisco by a former member.

The complaint, filed by former cult member James Cobb Jr., concerned threats of mass suicide allegedly made by leaders of the religious cult, according to Lane.

"Garry filed a sworn answer to the complaint on March 14, 1978," Lane said, "so he must have read it."

There was another reference to mass deaths in a letter typed on People's Temple stationery and sent to members of Congress this year that Garry would have known about as legal counsel for the group, Lane said.

"I can say without hesitation that we are devoted to a decision that it is better even to die than to be constantly harassed," Lane quoted the letter as saying.

On April 18, 1978, the People's Temple published a press release "explaining" the "decision to die" statement in the letter as the unanimous vote of the Guyana commune, Lane said.

According to Garry, People's Temple wanted Lane, with his theories of government conspiracy, to try to offset remarks about Jones and the temple being made by dissidents.

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